

Resolution No.: 18-104
Introduced: March 31, 2015
Adopted: March 31, 2015

**COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
SITTING AS THE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THAT PORTION
OF THE MARYLAND-WASHINGTON REGIONAL DISTRICT
WITHIN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

By: County Council

SUBJECT: Approval of December 2014 Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment

1. On December 5, 2014, the Montgomery County Planning Board transmitted to the County Executive and the County Council the December 2014 Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment.
2. The December 2014 Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment amends portions of the Approved and Adopted 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan. It also amends The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as amended.
3. On January 30, 2015, the Director of the Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget transmitted to the County Council the Fiscal Impact Statement for the December 2014 Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment.
4. On February 3, 2015, the County Council held a public hearing on the December 2014 Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment. The Minor Master Plan Amendment was referred to the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee for review and recommendation.
5. On March 2, 2015, the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee held a worksession to review the issues raised in connection with the December 2014 Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment.
6. On March 24, 2015, the County Council reviewed the Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment and the recommendations of the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, sitting as the District Council for that portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution:

The Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment, dated December 2014, is approved with revisions. County Council revisions to the Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment are identified below. Deletions to the text of the Plan are indicated by [brackets], additions by underscoring. All page references are to the December 2014 Planning Board Draft Plan.

Page 13: Revise Proposed Zoning Map (Map 7) to reflect Council changes.

Page 14: Revise the second and third paragraphs and combine into one paragraph as follows:

The properties north of Aspen Hill Road may support mixed-use development as the market evolves in the future, particularly if the properties are assembled and redeveloped comprehensively. [To facilitate such development, the properties recommended for NR zoning within this Minor Amendment area may be appropriate for CRT Floating Zones as the area further evolves.] More intense redevelopment should be focused toward Connecticut Avenue to give maximum visibility to new uses and make it easier for pedestrians on Connecticut Avenue to access those uses. Pedestrian amenities, including wide sidewalks, signage improvements directing toward transit options, green planting strips between pedestrians and vehicular areas, and significant tree planting should be provided along all connections. [Redevelopment of the vacant, former Vitro/BAE office site, should have its primary access off of Connecticut Avenue and access to/from Aspen Hill Road should be limited to a right-in/right-out driveway to alleviate queuing pressures on Aspen Hill Road and intersection congestion during peak hours.] To minimize additional traffic flow impacts on Aspen Hill Road near its intersection with Connecticut Avenue, consider limiting access to and from the site from the existing full-movement Home Depot driveway from Connecticut Avenue. If it is determined that another driveway access is necessary, consider a right-in/right-out driveway on Aspen Hill Road, if possible for emergency vehicles only.

Page 14: Revise the first sentence in the fourth paragraph as follows:

Projects adjacent to single-family residential neighborhoods should use compatible building mass, height and setback, and façade articulation to create [a] appropriate transitions to those neighborhoods.

Page 14: Revise the fifth paragraph as follows:

This Plan recognizes that there may be a phased redevelopment of the north side of Aspen Hill Road over a long period of time. It is likely that the former Vitro/BAE property will redevelop in the shorter term, followed by potential redevelopment of the remaining properties over time, as the market evolves to support a moderately dense mix of land uses. While this Plan recognizes

[the need to accommodate some] that near-term [, single-use] development may be single-use, the long-range goal is to facilitate the opportunity for a comprehensive redevelopment of these sites should any of the properties change use or be consolidated. A Combination Retail Conditional Use is not appropriate for the Minor Amendment area because such a use would have a significant long-term impact on the area and alter the character of the surrounding low-density residential neighborhoods. This Plan envisions an area with great variety of vibrant and more compact uses. Therefore, a use that includes a department or retail store in combination with a pharmacy and full-line grocery is not appropriate for the MMPA area. Such a use would have a significant long-term impact on the retail character of the area and the variety of sizes and types of commercial uses and tenants.

Page 14: Revise the Recommendation heading and bullets as follows:

Zoning Recommendation

- Rezone the entire Minor Amendment area north [properties on the northwest corner] of Aspen Hill Road and west of Connecticut Avenue (Figure 1 above, No. [2] 1) from EOF-3.0, H-60, R-90, and CRT-0.75, C-0.75, R-0.25, H-45 to CRT-1.5, C-0.5, R-1.0, H-60.
- [Rezone the remaining properties on the north and northwest portion of the Minor Amendment Area (Figure 1 above, No. 1) from EOF-3.0, H-60 and R-90 to NR-0.5, H-60.]

Page 15: Revise the Recommendations heading as follows:

Zoning Recommendations

Page 16: Revise the Design Requirements heading and first paragraph under that heading as follows:

Design [Requirements] Guidance

[The properties recommended for NR zoning within this Plan area may be appropriate for CRT Floating Zones as the area further evolves.] To facilitate the [potential] transition of this area to [CRT zoning] a more pedestrian-friendly, accessible, and human-scale environment, any redevelopment within the Minor Amendment area [of the properties recommended for NR zoning must] should incorporate [certain mandatory] the following design elements. [Under no circumstances should such properties redevelop without incorporating all of the following requirements:]

Page 16: Revise Design Guidance #2, **Building Placement**, as follows:

2. **Building Placement:** All buildings must front on a street (public or private), the shared use drive between Vitro/BAE and Home Depot, or public open space, with a preference for concentrating new development along Connecticut Avenue to establish a street presence along this major thoroughfare and give maximum visibility to new uses. [All new buildings must comply with the following requirements:]

- [At least 50% of the front facade of any building fronting on Connecticut Avenue or Aspen Hill Road must be within 35 feet of the right-of-way on which the building fronts, except that building placement along Connecticut Avenue may exceed the 35 foot distance from the right-of-way to the minimum extent necessary to achieve plan objectives.]
- [At least 50% of the front facade of any other building should not typically be located more than 20 feet from the street or public open space on which the building fronts.]
- [On the north side of Aspen Hill Road, non-residential buildings may not be constructed within 100 feet of an adjacent lot improved with a detached house.]

Page 16: Add a new Number 3 and renumber the rest of the list on the page:

3. Transition to Residential Neighborhoods: Ensure appropriate transitions between non-residential development and adjacent residential neighborhoods to minimize the impact of new development on those neighborhoods. As required by the zoning ordinance, provide landscaping and new tree canopy in parking areas; taper building heights away from existing residential development; and retain (and expand where feasible) existing trees and greenery the entire length of the western edge of the Vitro property to buffer new development. On the north side of Aspen Hill Road, non-residential buildings may not be constructed within 100 feet of an adjacent lot improved with a detached house.

Page 17: Revise Figure 3: Design Criteria Diagram to illustrate the transition area along the entirety of the western edge of the Vitro/BAE property line on the north side of Aspen Hill Road and add footnote indicating that the length of the 100 foot setback for non-residential buildings depends on the location of adjacent detached homes.

Page 18: Revise the third paragraph, Transitions, as follows:

Transitions between commercially zoned properties and immediately adjacent single-family neighborhoods are defined in the Zoning Ordinance. [Compatibility requirements, including height compatibility, are described in section 4.1.8.B.] Specific guidance on transitions and compatibility are provided in the Land Use and Zoning Recommendations and Design Criteria sections of this Plan.

Page 19: Revise the first paragraph as follows:

The study area is part of a larger commercial cluster, which serves as a neighborhood center for the Aspen Hill area. The scope of this amendment was limited to a group of properties along the western edge of the cluster, so the combined potential of the larger Aspen Hill commercial area was not explored in full detail by this exercise. An update to the 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan is programmed to begin in July 2015[,] and will address the larger commercial area. In addition to changing land use dynamics in the region, the inclusion in the County's Master Plan [the approval of priority planning and design studies] of the Georgia Avenue North Bus Rapid Transit line, with a proposed station at Georgia Avenue and Connecticut Avenue[,] (see Transportation Section), has the potential to catalyze more compact development in this area.

Page 20: Delete the last sentence of the third paragraph as follows:

Georgia Avenue (MD 97) is a six-lane major highway traversing in a northwest-southeast direction approximately a quarter mile east of the properties subject to the Minor Amendment. Traffic signals are in place at the nearby intersections with Aspen Hill Road and Connecticut Avenue. The posted speed limit on Georgia Avenue is 45 MPH. The 2013 AADT on Georgia Avenue, as reported by SHA for the segment near Connecticut Avenue (MD 185), is approximately 43,900 vehicles per day. This represents a 3.8% decrease from 2011. Georgia Avenue is planned as a bus-rapid transit (BRT) corridor with a station to be located at the intersection with Connecticut Avenue. [SHA, Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), and Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is currently considering various design and operations alternatives for this BRT line.]

Page 20: Revise the fifth paragraph as follows:

The Minor Amendment area is served by a number of bus routes provided by the County's Ride On and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Metrobus services (see Map 8, following page). Along Connecticut Avenue there are a total of four bus routes, three of which are provided by Ride On (#26, #34, #41) and one route (#L8) by Metrobus. Route #26 also runs east-west along Aspen Hill Road. The bus stops along the segment of Georgia Avenue in the vicinity of the Minor Amendment area are served by a total of [five] four bus routes, one Ride-on (#53) and [four] three Metrobus ([#Y5,] #Y2, #Y7, #Y8[, #Y9]). Depending on time of day, these buses typically run every 20-30 minutes.

Page 21: Delete the last two sentences on the page (describing proposed Bus Rapid Transit on Georgia Avenue) as follows:

In November 2013, the County Council approved the *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan*. The plan recommends 11 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors throughout the County, including the segment of Georgia Avenue through the study area of this Minor Master Plan Amendment, to be developed in order to help ease congestion and improve travel times. According to the plans for this corridor (Corridor 1: Georgia Avenue North), a future BRT station is to be located at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Connecticut Avenue. [The MTA, SHA, and MCDOT are in the process of evaluating four different transit and BRT design options that include dedicated lanes for transit vehicles and operational upgrades for traffic signals to give priority to transit vehicles. There is currently no funding source identified for construction of this BRT line, however, the current planning phase is funded.]

Page 22: Delete the first and second bullets under Transportation Recommendations and replace as follows:

- [Access to Aspen Hill Road from the Vitro/BAE site should be provided via a right-in/right-out driveway. This will prevent entering/exiting left-turning vehicles from worsening the existing back-ups on eastbound Aspen Hill Road from the nearby traffic

signal at Connecticut Avenue. Additionally, on the northern side of Aspen Hill Road between the Vitro/BAE site driveway and Connecticut Avenue traffic signal there are already three other curb cuts (two for the Shell gas station, one for Dunkin Donuts) in the short span of approximately 400 feet. This driveway should serve as secondary access and be shifted as far west as possible at the time the property is redeveloped.]

- [Primary access to the Vitro/BAE site should be provided via the existing full-movement Home Depot access driveway to Connecticut Avenue. A traffic signal should be installed at this intersection to improve both traffic flow and pedestrian safety.]
- To address potential traffic operations impacts on Aspen Hill Road, the primary access to and from the Vitro/BAE site should be via Connecticut Avenue, a major highway, and the majority—if not all—of the traffic should be directed there. To address potential traffic operations and pedestrian impacts on Connecticut Avenue, a traffic signal at this intersection should be considered. If a secondary access to and from the site from Aspen Hill Road is necessary, it should be designed to minimize the traffic there and its impact on residents living on or near that road. To further limit and control traffic impacts to the adjacent residential neighborhood, consideration should be given to only allowing access to/from the Vitro/BAE site at Aspen Hill Road, if possible for emergency vehicles only.

Page 22: Delete the fifth bullet under Transportation Recommendations and replace as follows:

- [The existing transition from four-lanes to two-lanes heading westbound on Aspen Hill Road should be shifted as far west as feasibly possible to provide more merging room for westbound vehicles and more stacking space for eastbound vehicles queuing from the traffic signal at Connecticut Avenue.]
- If warranted by a traffic study, consider shifting the westbound transition on Aspen Hill Road from four lanes to two lanes for a minimal distance to provide more merging room for westbound vehicles; this transition should extend no further than the western driveway of the existing church.

Page 23: Delete the first bullet and replace as follows:

- [The southbound free-right ramp from Georgia Avenue to Connecticut Avenue should ultimately be removed. Instead, southbound right turns should come to the traffic signal with all other traffic. Removal of the free-right ramp will slow traffic traveling southbound on Connecticut Avenue by the Vitro/BAE site.]
- Consider removing the southbound free-right ramp from Georgia Avenue to Connecticut Avenue, so that southbound right turns would come to the traffic signal with all other traffic. Removal of the free-right ramp would slow traffic traveling southbound on Connecticut Avenue by the Vitro/BAE site.

Page 24: Delete the last bullet on the page (under Reduce energy consumption by) as follows:

- [Integrating geothermal systems to reduce energy consumption and allowing and encouraging wind energy conversion systems and large district energy systems.]

Page 25: Insert a Community Facilities section before the Implementation section as follows:

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Minor Master Plan Amendment area (MMPA) is well served by nearby schools, parks, recreation areas, and libraries. Brookhaven Elementary School and Parkland Magnet Middle School are located within a mile of the MMPA area. The Aspen Hill Public Library, situated on Aspen Hill Road, is less than a half mile from the intersection of Connecticut Ave and Aspen Hill Road, and the Wheaton Woods Swimming Pool is a short walk to the west beyond the Library. According to Montgomery County Public Schools, the elementary and middle schools that serve the MMPA area are projected to be within capacity for the next six years. At the high school level, the area is served by the Downcounty High Schools Consortium - Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton. Blair, Einstein, and Northwood high schools are projected to exceed their capacities in the coming years. Given the smaller geographic scope of this Plan and the limited emphasis on new, near-term residential redevelopment, this MMPA would have limited to no impact on school capacity. As part of the overall update to the 1994 *Aspen Hill Master Plan*, school capacity and the need for any future capital programs will be evaluated in greater detail.

Several nearby parks serve this area of the Aspen Hill community, including English Manor Neighborhood Park, Parkland Local Park, Aquarius Local Park, Northgate Local Park, Strathmore Local Park, Aspen Hill Local Park, and Harmony Hills Neighborhood Park. The Matthew Henson State Park and Trail is within a mile of the MMPA, and Rock Creek Park and Trail is within approximately one and a half miles. The 2012 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan does not identify needs for additional parkland in this area of the County; it only specifies 2 additional tennis courts. As properties redevelop within the boundaries of this MMPA, the new development will be required to provide public amenity space as well as meet the recreation guidelines to help offset the needs of any new residents.

As recommended in the Transportation section (page 23), this plan supports connections that serve as vital links to the regional network and Countywide trail corridors. This Plan affirms the recommendation in the 2005 *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* to install a shared-use path along the western side of Connecticut Avenue (reference code SP-27) to connect to the regional network, including the Matthew Henson Trail. This shared-use path should be constructed in conjunction with applicable redevelopment in the MMPA.

Page 25: Add the following language after the first sentence in the Implementation section:

Proposed Zoning Text Amendment

The CRT zone incorporates a series of prescriptive form and placement standards as a means to accomplishing the intent of the zone. Flexibility is currently built into the Zoning Code by allowing a developer to choose to develop under the Optional Method of development. By doing so, development standards are established by the site plan approval process and are therefore instituted through Planning Board review. Even with this option, however, through ongoing outreach and training sessions on the new Zoning Code, concern continues regarding

certain development standards. In response, an alternative to the approval process under Standard Method Development should be considered to allow additional flexibility through the site plan approval process.

Page 25: Revise the Proposed Zoning table to reflect Council changes.

General

All illustrations and tables included in the Plan will be revised to reflect the District Council changes to the Planning Board Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment (December 2014). The text and graphics will be revised as necessary to achieve and improve clarity and consistency, to update factual information, and to convey the actions of the District Council. Graphics and tables will be revised to be consistent with the text.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Linda M. Lauer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Linda" is written in a larger, more prominent script, followed by "M." and "Lauer". The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council